BRYAN CRITICISES DUTCH COLONIAL SYSTEM IN EAST INDIES.

Singapore, Feb. 3.—As the Dutch have administered in what they call Netherlands India a colonial system quite different in its methods from the systems adopted by other nations, I have thought it worth while to make some inquiries about it.

The Malay archipelago, which might also be described as a continent cut up into islands, has furnished a farm on which several nations have experimented in colonialism, but the Dutch, both in length of occupancy and in the number of people subjected to their rule, are easily first. The archipelago is more than 4,000 miles long from east to west, and if the Philippine islands are included, 1,200 miles wide. Some of the islands are larger than European states; Borneo and New Guinea each have an area greater than the British Isles. On the may the islands of the archipelago look like stepping stones connecting Asia with Australia, but some writers, arguing from the fauna and flora as well as from the depths of surrounding waters, contend that the western islands are an extension of Asia and the eastern ones of Australia. Alfred Russell Wallace, for instance, points out that the animals, birds and natural products of the two sections differ so much as to suggest that one group is much older than the other.

This archipelago is the home of one of the branches into which the human family is divided, viz., the Malay or brown race. These people are distinct in appearance and in many of their characteristics from the yellow and black races, as well as from the white race. There are in some of the islands remnants of aboriginal tribes, but the Malays from time immemorial have furnished the prevailing type. They have shown themselves capable of continuous and systematic labor where they have been subjected to coercion, or where a sufficient inducement has been presented as a stimulus, but the depressing influence of a continuous summer, added to the bounty of the tropics, has naturally made them less industrious than those who live in the temperate zone. The clothing required by the Malay is insignificant in amount and value. The little children are bare and seem to enjoy a shower as much as ducks do. In Sourabaya, the second city in Java, we saw a group of them naked sliding on their stomachs on the marble floor of an open porch during a heavy rain. This seemed a fairly satisfactory substitute for the ice ponds of the north.

The adults, both men and women, wear a sarong (except when the men content themselves with a breechclout). The sarong, a simple strip of cloth, is draped about the figure with all the fullness in front, and fastened in some mysterious way without the aid of buttons, hooks or pins. This garment, if garment it may be called, gives opportunity for the exercise of taste, and the range in price is sufficient to permit of some extravagance in dress. The best native sarongs are more expensive than silk, the cloth being overlaid with wax, upon which the pattern is traced and the dyes applied by hand. The masses use a cheap cotton print manufactured in Europe. One of the striking peculiarities of Javanese life is the adoption of the sarong by the European women for morning wear. Ladies who appear at dinner in full evening dress may be seen on the balconies and streets in the morning hours, clad in loose hanging sarongs and thin dressing sacques, their bare feet encased in sandals. On the Dutch boat upon which we left Batavia we saw posted notices designating the hours during which the sarong could be worn, and giving permission to men to wear a palama-like outfit during the same hours.

The Malay women wear no hats, but the men usually wear a turban, the tying of which is a great perplexity to the foreigner.

The natives of the Malay islands appear to be a mild-mannered and peaceful people, although fighting tribes have been encountered in the mountain regions, the suppression of which cost the Dutch many lives and a large outlay of florins. In Sumatra there are sections that have never been subdued.

The Chinaman is to be found throughout the archipelago; in fact, he far outstrips all other foreign elements. The population of Java is given as 28,747,000 in the government statistics, and of this total, 277,000 are Chinese. The number of Europeans is given as 62,477, and the number of Arabs at 18,000, while a little more than 3,000 come from other Asiatic countries. I was informed that the 62,000 described as Europeans included the half castes, who number more than 40,000, the number of real Europeans being about 20,000. In the other islands controlled by Holland, the population is given at a little more than five and a half millions, and the number of Chinese at 260,000, while the European population is estimated at 13,000, the Arabs at 9,000, and other Asiatics at 13,000. It will be seen from these figures that the Chinese form the chief foreign ingredient in Netherlands India, as they do in Borneo and the Straits Settlements. In Java, where we had a chance to observe them, we found that the Chinese monopolized the mercantile business, except where they were compelled to share it with Arabs and Indians. We also heard of them as money loaners, the rate of interest being generally usurious. It may be said to their credit, however, that as Shylocks the Arabs can surpass them. The superiority of the Arab in this respect has given rise to the saying among the natives that the Chinaman leaves a native with nothing but a sarong, while an Arab strips him bare. Many Chinamen have grown rich and have permanently identified themselves with the country, and of these some have discarded the queue entirely, while others have retained it in a diminutive form, a little wisp of hair growing from a spot not much larger than a dollar and lengthened out with silk thread.

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Apropos of the Chinese agitation against our exclusion act, it is interesting to know that the Chinese born in Java presented a petition to the governor general a few years ago asking for the restriction of the further immigration of Chinese coolies. The petition was not granted, but the leader of the movement so aroused the wrath of the coolies that they called upon him in a body and pelted his house with mud.

In all of the Malay states the opium vice is turned to account by the rulers. In some places the sale of opium is a governmena monopoly, while in others it is farmed out to the highest bidder. In North Borneo there is a district called Sarawak owned and ruled by an Englishman who is known as Rajah Brooke. When we were passing through Singapore I noticed in a mornin paper an advertisement where the Sarawak government asked for bids for a three years' lease of the "opium farm," "gambling farm" and "arrack farm" (arrack is the native name for an inaoxicating

A Native of Singapore.

liquor). In all of the archipelago the vices of the people seem to be as remunerative to the government as their virtues, and I was reminded of the Chinese official at Peking who jokingly informed me that he had a selfish reason for opposing the boycott of American goods because it would deprive him of American cigarettes, of which he was very fond.

The Dutch traders followed the Portuguese into the East Indies and in time supplanted them. Holland then chartered the East India Trading company and Amsterdam became the spice center from which all Europe drew its supplies. The Dutch Trading company was manned by a thrifty crew, and it was not long before they conceived of monopolizing the world's spice market, and they accomplished this by destroying groves and prohibiting competition by treaty with the natives. They are also charged with destroying spice by the ton in Amsterdam in order to maintain the price. One apologist for this almost universially condemned practice of the Dutch says:

"When the Dutch established their influence in these seas and relieved the native princes from their Portuguese oppressors they saw that the easiest way to repay themselves would be to get the spice trade into their own hands. For this purpose they adopted the wise principle of concentrating the culture of these valuable products in these spots of which they could have complete control. To do this effectually it was necessary to abolish the culture and trade in all other places, which they succeeded in doing by treaty with the native rulers. These agreed to have all the spice trees in their possessions destroyed. They gave up large though fluctuating revenues, but they gained in return a fixed subsidy, freedom from the constant attacks and harsh oppression of the Portuguese, and a continuance of their regal power and exclusive authority over their own subjects, which is maintained in all the islands except Ternate to this day. It is no doubt supposed by most Englishmen, who have been accustomed to look upon this act of the Dutch with vague horror, as something utterly unprincipled and barbarous; that the native population suffered grievously by this destruction of such valuable property. But it is certain that this is not the case."

He then proceeds to charge that the native sultans had a "rigid monopoly" of the spice trade before the Dutch arrived and that the latter, by prohibiting the cultivation of spices, left the natives more time for the production of food and other salable things, and concluded: "I believe, therefore, that this abolition of the spice trade in the Moluccas was actually beneficial to the inhabitants, and that it was an act both wise in itself and morally and politically justifiable."

It will be noticed that in a very brief space he employs the arguments mainly relied upon to support monopoly wherever it has appeared, and also for colonialism in its worst form. In the first place, the Dutch had to "repay themselves" for having "relieved the native princes from their Portuguese oppressors"—that is, they had to collect pay for their philanthropy; second, as the sultans were doing the same thing, the Dutch might as well do it—that is, the very familiar argument, "if we don't do it, somebody else will;" and third, it was a good thing for the natives—it is never difficult to prove this to the man who profits by the system. But nothing is said as to the effect of the monopoly upon consumers of spices throughout the world. It does not seem to occur to the writer above quoted (Wallace) that they are to be considered. The view point from which he looks at the whole matter can be judged from his admonition to the British that they must not be too much "afraid of the cry of despotism and slavery" if they are to improve their "rude subjects" and raise them up toward their own level.

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At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Dutch East India company became involved and turned its possessions over to the crown of Holland, since which time Netherlands India has been a crown colony. There was a brief interim of British rule (1811 to 1816), but at the close of the Napoleonic wars the Dutch regained their possessions by treaty, and the English congratulated themselves that they had been relieved of a burden.

The Dutch have governed Java through the natives, a resident acting as "elder brother" to the Javanese ruler. While the native government has not been disturbed, and while the native ruler is protected from rival claimants, he is really a prisoner in his own castle and cannot leave the premises without permission. However, as these native rulers receive good salaries and are allowed to exact homage from their subjects, they seem quite content with their lot and the people, naturally docile, yield obedience to the chiefs of their own race.

The culture system, aside from the indirect method of ruling, is the distinguishing feature of Dutch colonialism as it existed until recent years. The East India company followed the practice of the native princes and collected a land tax or rent of one-fifth of the crop, and required in addition the labor of all able-bodied males for one day in five. During the five years of British rule forced labor was abolished and a land tax substituted for the one-fifth rent, while a separate property system was encouraged. As soon as the Dutch resumed control, they went back to the old regime except that they demanded one day's labor in seven instead of one day in five. By regulating the crops to be planted, by collecting the fifth of the produce of the land, and by compelling the peasants to plant one-fifth of the village land in crops to be sold to the government at a fixed price far below the market price, the government of Holland derived large revenues from its India possessions. It has been estimated that in fifty years a sum exceeding $300,000,000 was exacted from the natives in forced labor and in the sale of produce below the market price. As might be expected, the greed which manifested itself in the conduct of the government aroused increasing criticism and the authorities were at last compelled to change their methods.

Those who travel through Java are unanimous in their praise of the beautiful roads and the substantial bridges that span the streams; they admire the commodious plantation homes, the splendid tea and coffee farms and the well built and well kept cities, and they are inclined to excuse the means employed by the foreigners in the development of the islands. It must be remembered, however, that the rice fields, which are most attractive, existed before the Europeans set foot upon the soil and that the spices, instead of being introduced by the Dutch, were the products which first attracted their attention. The Dutch have charged a high price for the services rendered and have given little attention to the intellectual and moral improvement of the people.

Being surprised that the Javanese had a well developed system of agriculture and irrigation before the Europeans arrived, I asked an intelligent Hollander: "What, then, have the Dutch taught the Javanese?" and he replied, laughingly, "We have taught them to pay us their money."

The fact that the culture system has, after full discussion, been abandoned, is a sufficient condemnation of it, and the fact that reforms are being introduced is a confession that they were needed. I had the pleasure of meeting the present governor, General Van Heutsz, and found him interested in enlarging the educational system and in lightening the burdens upon the people. He has already reduced the labor requirement one-half, so that the natives now give one day in fourteen to the government instead of one day in seven.

The governor of Netherlands India receives the same salary as our president, and the resident receives a salary which, including allowances, amounts to nearly $10,000. The expenses of the colonial government are paid by the natives and by the foreigners residing there, but the government of Holland no longer draws an income from the islands. Her advantages are, at present indirect ones and consist, first, of profits earned by her citizens in trade with the islands; second, of rents collected by her citizens from plantations; and, third, of salaries drawn by her citizens for civil or military service in the islands.

Formerly land was sold to foreigners, but for a great many years it has been the policy of the government to sell no land whatever to either Europeans or Asiatics, but to lease it for seventy-five years or less. I was much surprised to find that the natives own considerably more than twice as much as foreigners hold under lease or deed, and that land, the product of which must be sold to the government at a fixed price, has been reduced to 300,000 acres.

One of the beneficent reforms about to be inaugurated is the establishment of governmen pawnshops which will loan money to the people at a low rate of interest and thus rescue them from the extortion that has been practiced upon them. The government has already established savings banks in which the deposits are constantly increasing.

There is a growing demand in Java for a greater recognition of the people in government, and this demand is being yielded to in the cities. The colonial authorities have encouraged the soldiers to marry native women, these marriages terminating when the soldiers return to Europe. As a result, there is a half caste element which has been given better educational advantages than are accorded to the natives. This element considers itself as native, although counted in the census as Europeans, and is already organizing with a view to securing more civil liberty.

Whatever may be said of Dutch colonialism in the past, a new era is dawning, and the present rulers recognize that their administration must be measured by the improvement in the people rather than by the profits drained from the land by Europeans.

WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN.